

House Bill 1233

By: Representative Maddox of the 172nd

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To amend Chapter 3 of Title 27 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to wildlife generally, so as to provide for permits for quality deer management programs on privately owned tracts of land; to provide requirements for such programs; to change certain provisions relating to unlawful enticement of game; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

PART I
SECTION 1-1.

Chapter 3 of Title 27 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to wildlife generally, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"27-3-51.

(a) Subject to the provisions of this Code section, the department may issue an annual permit to an owner or lessee of a privately owned tract of land for the purpose of operating a quality deer management program for such tract.

(b) Any landowner or lessee of a privately owned tract of land who desires to obtain such a permit may apply to the department on forms provided by the department. Any such application shall be accompanied by the owner's or lessee's proposed quality deer management plan that is signed by a wildlife biologist and includes:

(1) A map of the tract, in such scale and with such detail as required by the department;

(2) A detailed set of management requirements aimed at protecting from harvest all 1.5 year-old and younger bucks unless they are obviously injured or sick;

(3) A plan for removing those adult bucks which, because of poor antler quality, could be categorized as inferior or culls;

(4) Specified minimum and maximum numbers of does, on a per hundred acre basis, to be removed from the tract to keep the total deer population at or below carrying capacity of the land; and

(5) Provisions for maintaining a high quality protein diet for the deer population throughout the year and not just during hunting seasons. The plan may include food plots or supplemental feedings, or both, which may consist of peanuts, soybeans, pelletized commercial feed, or any other mix of foods that contains at least 18 percent protein by weight. If food plots or supplemental feedings are included, then the plan must specify routine relocating and dispersing of supplemental feeding locations or stations so as to minimize threats of spreading disease.

(c)(1) In addition to the permit required by this Code section, each applicant shall be required to obtain a private shooting preserve license or commercial shooting preserve license, as applicable, and pay the fee required by Code Section 27-2-23.

(2) The department may establish and require a fee for the permit under this Code section in such amount as may be reasonable and necessary to offset part or all of the cost of administering the program.

(d) No permit shall be issued under this Code section unless the management plan is approved by the department as conforming with sound principles of wildlife management. If the department denies an application, the applicant may submit a new plan.

(e) Each permit granted under this Code section shall be subject to the condition that the department may modify the permit and management plan whenever, in the judgment of the department, such modification is necessary and appropriate to conform with sound principles of wildlife management. Each permit for a tract and all deer hunting on a permitted tract shall be subject to compliance with the terms of the approved management plan and any modification imposed by the department.

(f) Possession and bag limits shall be established in accordance with Code Section 27-3-15.

(g) It shall be unlawful to shoot deer over supplemental feed unless there is a clear biological need to improve herd health and such need is detailed in the management plan for such tract.

(h) If a permittee detects or becomes aware of any sign of sickness in a deer on the permitted tract, he or she shall notify the department for purposes of determining the disease agent.

(i) Each permit shall expire annually on July 31. Each permittee shall, not later than such expiration date, report to the department the numbers of bucks and does taken on such tract during the preceding hunting season and the estimated ages thereof.

(j) Except as otherwise provided by this Code section, all other applicable provisions of this title and rules and regulations issued by the department shall apply to deer hunting on such tract.

(k) The board shall adopt such rules and regulations as are reasonable and necessary for purposes of this Code section."

PART II

SECTION 2-1.

Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 27-3-9, relating to the unlawful enticement of game, as follows:

"(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to place, expose, deposit, distribute, or scatter any corn, wheat, or other grains, salts, apples, or other feeds or bait so as to constitute a lure or attraction or enticement for any game bird or game animal on or over any area where hunters are or will be hunting; provided, however, that is:

(1) The prohibition of this subsection shall not apply and it shall be lawful to hunt deer within the vicinity of such feeds if the hunter is at least 200 yards away from and not within sight of the feed or bait; and

(2) The prohibition of this subsection shall not apply and it shall be lawful to hunt deer within the vicinity of such feeds used as a lure or attraction or enticement for deer on a privately owned tract of land in accordance with a permitted quality deer management program as provided by Code Section 27-3-51."

PART III

SECTION 3-1.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.